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ON
PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION
WITH THE
RED RIVER DISTRICT,
CENTRAL BRITISH AMERICA;
OR,
"ALLEGED IMPOSSIBILITY
SOLVED BY EXAMPLE."

In Illustration applied towards the Unity of the
Empire of Great Britain.

BY
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SOCIETY, THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION, and THE BRITISH NORTH
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION.

READ BEFORE THE ROYAL COLONIAL SOCIETY,
17TH JANUARY, 1870.

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THE substance of the paper to be brought before you this evening, forms the subject of notes originally written many years ago, and dealing with a territory limited in extent.

It may seem strange, nay, almost to require an apology, that your attention should be invited in such a case and on such a subject, and yet I hope to make it evident, if you kindly favour me with that attention, that we possess in the features of that territory and in its story, a key to what, I trust, will prove to be a problem of the day.

Times change, and generations pass away; but the physical features of the earth remain the same, and the lessons which her silent but constant admonition teaches are free from the mutability of the transactions of mankind. Her exhortation may be given in the lines—

"In the multitude of people is the King's honour,
But in the want of people is the destruction of the Prince."

Her conformation points out how this promise may be best fulfilled.

THIS, CARRIED OUT, IS COLONISATION.

An over-crowded state of population has no legitimate place upon the earth; but the emigration which would avoid it may be accompanied by something even more evil than the negative want of people.

One more preliminary remark I venture. This theatre,* if the theories of the ceaseless vibrations of the air are true, is vocal, so to speak, with expositions of the varied powers that human skill has, for the

* Of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

benefit of humanity, brought to bear upon the unchanging laws of nature. In no other place, then, could I hope to bring forward so appropriately an illustration of the directions that are impressed upon the surface of the earth for the application of that skill to the purposes for which it has been given and designed. And, as I trust to shew that the instance to be brought before you points out how the now scattered, severed, separated parts of a great empire may be wrought in one harmonious whole, before no assembly could I hope for so much indulgence for my faults, or so much favour for my object, as before the ROYAL COLONIAL SOCIETY, the centre and type of that oneness, and, I hope, the harbinger of its achievement.

To that oneness, rapidity and completeness of communication are indispensable, and the completeness of communication must include so much inviolability as may pertain to human matters.

My immediate object is to adduce evidence by illustration, and hence, by analogy, proof, that the means of attaining that completeness of communication is placed absolutely in our hands, and cannot be disregarded without fault: that elements which, dis or mis-placed, are a perplexity and danger, have only to be adjusted according to the ordinance imprinted on the earth to bring about a great measure of that condition which is intended by the words earth has so often heard in vain, of peace and of goodwill, for, as I have said before, and I would beg leave to repeat it, an over-crowded population, with its attendant horrors, forms no part of the Council that dictated the commandment, "REPLENISH THE EARTH AND SUBDU IT."

I ask for something more than your indulgence if I have seemed to occupy your time with truisms; but it is essential to have a common ground to rest on and to start from, and it appears to me the conviction and force of these very truisms should form the base from which all efforts for colonisation ought to be directed.

An Empire to which the means of strength are given, cannot without fault be weak. Its duty is the guardianship of peace.

An Empire containing both a teeming population and fertile wastes, unless it brings the two together, IS ACTING AGAINST THE ORDINANCE OF GOD.

My illustration is drawn from portions of an inland navigation in the dominion of Canada, known as the Ridean Canal, which was constructed to connect by an inviolable road the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. In order, however, to show in what manner peculiari-

ties in its construction and of its story bear on communication between the several parts of the Empire of the magnitude I have described, I must first rapidly sketch its general geographical position.

This is old ground, but it has to be travelled in instruction till it is carried out in fact. It is still Christopher Columbus pleading with the sovereignty of the day. Christopher Columbus, solving the problem, bearing the burden, hardly overcoming scepticism, to wreath his queen and country with the crown of empire, of triumph, and success; but to go himself to prison and to death: to disregard and yet to victory, though, with his discovery practically given to another. But wherever we turn in the story of discovery, from the days of the Genoese to those of Mackenzie the Scot, we find the same motive, arousing similar energies, stimulating a like ambition, giving earnest of the same hope of ultimate success, and leading to achievements, which, though not yet practically carried out, leave to those who may complete them only the ingathering of the harvest, if they will be content to tread in the footsteps marked out by the labour and admonition of the past.

This problem, conceived by Columbus and carried out by him to the first great germ of his glorious discoveries, and taken up and worked upon by the long roll of his successors, was, that across the supposed waste of wild waters of the west and along the coasts of the unknown countries, the genius of the Genoese was persuaded, lay amidst those oceans, that there was the true, THE BEST, the shortest ROAD TO THE riches of the EAST. And it is so. Cabot, Verragano, Gomez, Cartier, Champlain, the expedition of King Henry VIII, bear evidence of the same conviction, which bore exploits down to the reign of King Charles II; and, if none other, at least the student of history, who may recognize the purpose of a higher hand in the inspiration of genius, especially when intensified by continuity, can scarcely fail to be impressed with the marked and singular character of the closing episode of this chain of brilliant discovery, brilliant adventure, and immovable though *still* unfulfilled conviction. In the reign of Charles II., the prosecution of this enterprize, of finding the highway to the East, is recognized as an object of national aspiration, the right and duty of its completion are assigned to a corporate body headed by the heroic Rupert, to be fulfilled as A TRUST "FOR THE PUBLIC ADVANTAGE OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE." This done, the roll here closes; the duty is assigned; the goal and the reward in view.

This chain of inspiration is not in error. The north-west passage has proved different in its nature from the expectations that had been formed; but it is there. A passage across the continent by rivers, lakes, and land, which has become of infinitely greater value than could ever have been a merely maritime passage. Right deductions from two laws of natural objects, and the right application of those deductions have given rise to two irresistible agents that must call forth new commerce, and new activity, at every step that traverses the continent.

The generation of steam, and the spark flying from pole to pole, inherent qualities of elements of the material world, are like the marks impressed upon the surface of the earth, in themselves only spark, or vapour, or indentation; but applied as they are given to be applied, they become the means for furnishing forth the provisions supplied by the Maker and Father of all, who is willing to sustain His Creation and His children with the bread of earthly as of heavenly life. The generation that has seen steamers and railways traversing the deep, and furrowing the surface of the earth, and the electric current encircling the globe, has had laid before it even so markedly as by the speech of the august sovereign of the empire itself, the theoretical solution of the mystery of Columbus, and has been invited to its reduction to practice.

I may, therefore, confidently assume that, in the abstract, this fact is recognized and placed above dispute.

Let me next point out how markedly plain is the impress or delineation to which I have adverted.

In the direction of shortest distance but of widest territory, where the climate is the most healthful of the continent, within territories still acknowledging the flag and sovereignty of England, is a line marked out across the continent with abundant facilities for its completion.

The indication is as singular as it is marked. As a rule almost without exception, the rivers of America, of which the giant size has been the wonder of many ages, flow either north or south. The exception to this general course of North American rivers, is exactly in the direction of the best route across the continent, and is indeed the cause of those advantages which it so clearly marks. The directions of rivers indicate the formation of a country; they are the inlets of all civilization. Frozen, they make the best of winter roads; navigable they decide the course and direction of commerce. This they do even in the era of railroads, which admit nowhere of so easy construction,

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as in the direction of navigable streams, and are nowhere so difficult of successful execution as across the direction of many water-courses."

Now the Mississippi and Missouri have their sources close to the British frontier, their tributaries in some instances even beyond that frontier, but their outlet is in the Gulf of Mexico. The Mackenzie, with the chain of its connected waters, winds through sixteen parallels of latitude, but pours at last into the Arctic Seas. Only the waters of the St. Lawrence flow in the direction of west to east, and that from nearly half-way across the continent, almost mingling at their sources with those of the fertile plains of Central British America, which again, in the directions of the Bow, Saskatchewan, and Calling Rivers, penetrate to the passes of the Rocky Mountains, where they mingle other of their sources with those of the Columbia, and by means of yet different connections with those of the Fraser River.

This sketch, which I have endeavoured to condense as much as possible, and to make as hasty as I could, consistently with anything like the necessary clearness, will, I trust, suffice to bring freshly before you, what possibly I might have ventured also to assume, namely, that there exist extraordinary facilities for carrying out complete communications across the continent of America, precisely where they are of greatest benefit in themselves, and where their being put to practical account would confer unrivalled advantage upon the Empire still appertaining to Great Britain.

At this point, however, assumption ceases to be safe. Granted, that it may not now be necessary to contend for the fact, palpable to all who pay attention to the subject, that North America forms a connection between the continents of Europe and Asia; that its position furnishes, in the abstract, the line of best communication between them. Granted, moreover, that such facilities exist, as the smallest globe or the merest outline map in a measure disclose, the contention continues sharp that the entire communication is not the less mythical and altogether impracticable; that closely as the waters of the several magnificent courses may approach, the interval is still too wide to be bridged over by the science of the 19th century, the early course of the rivers too tumultuous, and the country too rough to afford the materials for a practicable transit and communication.

I do not know that this remaining popular objection could be stated either more fairly or forcibly than it has been by a daily paper, enjoying both an influential circulation and considerable popularity.

I extract the portion immediately referring to the subject.

An article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of December 14th, 1869, reads as follows :—

“ . . . The Red River is (practically) all but inaccessible from Canada. On the other hand it is very accessible indeed from the contiguous parts of the (U.) States. . . . Enthusiastic people of the colonial party see no difficulty in all this : Canada has only, in their view, to make a railroad from Lake Superior to Red River, thence across the Rocky Mountains to Fraser River, and the work is accomplished, and British America bound together with a girdle of iron. To such reasoners as these, distance, climate and physical obstacles present no embarrassments at all. Those who have reflected a little more on the subject know, what speculative patriotism ignores, that there is no forcing colonisation or commerce to follow artificial routes, by land or sea, even if countless millions be devoted to making them. The natural lines must prevail ; Minnesota will always be close to Red River, Canada far from it. Even now, if the Dominion were forced to employ military force against these rough people, Canada, it is said, would have to ask the States permission to send that force through their territory. And this must be true, unless the two or three hundred roadless miles between Lake Superior and Red River traverse a much more penetrable region than it is commonly represented. It is of no use to shut our eyes to the unpleasant side of questions like this, or to call those unpatriotic who present it to us. Admit the difficulty, and try if courage and ingenuity will find a solution.”

I believe these words to be not only fair in intention, but to embody better acquaintance with the subject than is to be found in general, and had they been addressed towards the exposition of the fallacy of the pretensions of Canada to control the destinies of Central British America, and to make it the appendage of a country less than it, and itself altogether incomplete, they would have been substantially and morally correct.

There is no communication between Canada proper and the Red River. It is the doing of Canada that there is not.

There has long been a tendency to ever-increasing communication between Minnesota and Red River, and Canada has interfered successfully to prevent Imperial efforts from establishing direct communication between it and the Red River.

Thoroughly acquainted with all the existing facilities for constructing the intra-imperial communication with the Pacific, through British territories ; aware that she might have had the advantage of priority of execution—completely so, for the original projector of all lines south of the British frontier, Asa Whitney, was before their beginning, foremost to acknowledge her complete superiority, and the conditions which established it. Under all these circumstances it was the policy, deliberately adopted by what, heaven save the mark, was deemed high statesmanship, to impede this and every other possible work, for the avowed purpose of carrying partisan, in other words, selfish objects by utter and determined opposition to all public interests.

Faithful, if in nothing else, at least in copying the vices of England,—this was the result achieved by party strife.

The reward of this meritorious emulation of the example of Imperial England has been the acquisition (by the dominion) of the Red River territory, under circumstances that, all together, can only be dealt with, as they ought, before a judicial tribunal.

The non-existence of this necessary communication is not to be attributed to the physical conformation of the country ; but the erroneous impression that it is so admits of easy explanation.

Red River and Canada are British ; Minnesota is not ; Red River is nationally connected with Canada, not with Minnesota. The communication which exists with the latter, and not with the former, must therefore, it is partly assumed, be owing to natural facilities in the one case, and to impediments in the other, especially as the existing communication is about one third longer in distance than would be the direct. There are, moreover, persons who strenuously assert that inseparable obstacles exist to the construction of the latter.

The fallacy of the assumption thus plausibly set up admits of refutation very briefly.

This very route, now, in good faith, alleged to be impracticable, was formerly not only in constant, but in exclusive use. It is the site of very olden settlements. Its discontinuance was brought about by violence and bloodshed, and was finally owing to the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Traders, when exclusion from the interior became, not a geographical necessity, but the policy of the united and irresistible conspiracy. The cause of its not having been re-opened I have already named ; but perhaps the most conclusive evidence I can place before you in fewest words is that the

settlers and inhabitants of Assiniboia, or the Red River district, who are so lightly and contemptuously regarded because their number is at present small, and the injustices they have suffered under, and are suffering under, are many and great, have been desirous of themselves undertaking that share of the alleged impossibility falling within the limits of their own territory, that is west of the height of land legitimately separating Central British America from Canada, whilst the report of the Canadian Commissioner names £12,000 as the sum necessary to convert into an highway the whole of this appalling impossibility !!!

The regions of British America are all especially favourite haunts of this same demon of alleged impossibility. The chaotic condition of the empire, the alienation of the hosts he has seduced into hostility, and the multitudes of a once famine stricken people immolated at his shrine, are the melancholy trophies and monuments of his miserable skill. Dislodged with difficulty, and driven step by step from place to place, he seeks from each successive covert to destroy every endeavour to advance. Obstinate and incurable, though with no tactics or resource beyond delusion, he has not the less achieved many a piteous triumph. He is the angel and the instrument of passion, of prejudice and party.

The lessons inculcated by the example I have now reached are the necessity, in order to success, *of great and comprehensive aims in the prosecution of great enterprises, that of the combination or co-operation of means, and the severe vindication of nature for the violation of her laws in the penalties she otherwise exacts.*

The Rideau navigation extends from Montreal to Ottawa, upon the river of that name, and thence through a chain of lakes to Kingston.

It is a work, in point of execution and expenditure, perhaps unequalled in magnitude and excellence, if the sole object which was allowed to weigh in its construction be regarded, but it has become in less than a generation useless even for that immediate purpose, and upon this exclusion of all other considerations in its construction may probably be indirectly charged the loss of all that would have accrued of benefit to England and the Empire, had the girdle of her completed inter-communications encircled the globe before her alienated colonies had overshadowed her, before a new generation of hostility had been poured into them, before the commercial and imperial opportunities, which still are hers, had been exposed to any rivalry whatever. The

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loss, not only of material strength, but of influence and regard, the magnitude of which is indeed an evil most painfully appalling.

The sybil has burnt many of her books, but what of the remainder?

The events of the war, of 1812, with her separated people, served to exhibit the intense evils of the absence of secure communication between the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. This was necessarily evident before; indeed the subject had been mooted since 1790, but the overt testimony of experience was wanting. In its absence warning and representation had been wholly ineffectual. The evidence of recent evils was accordingly eagerly made use of to attain the necessary end. It is an essentially English custom to charge on the branches of its executive the follies and consequent disasters that accrue from legislative immobility in matters of enlarged and general bearing, easily explained from the destinies of an empire having in fact drifted into the power of an assembly, become more and more dominant, but originally convened under totally different circumstances, and for entirely different objects.

As was probably altogether inevitable, the proposal submitted to that assembly was limited to the immediate and proved necessities of that branch of the executive on which the initiation of the proposal devolved. In practice the effect was this:—The improvement of a portion of navigation, 400 miles shorter in length than that along the frontier, and on the precise right line of direction which it had been the dream and inspiration of all Western discovery to find, was rigidly restricted to the immediate necessities of a department organised for the transport of military stores.

Commercial considerations, the reclamation and settlement of land, the thorough examination of the country even, all such considerations were thrown aside, although it must have been, as it must always be, indisputably palpable that these, and these only, were the elements that could prove remunerative in the whole scheme, yet they were excluded from principles of economy, and for the want, still alas remaining, of any one imperial organisation framed to admit, or capable of admitting, of comprehensive aims, or of joint labour towards objects held in common.

The consequences proved sufficiently injurious. The direct route to the West, the Ottawa River, remains unto this day virtually closed. The Ottawa and Huron navigation, the key to the possession of the lakes and consequently the bulwark of the country, a construction that would have set at rest for ever the moot question of the defensibility of Canada, and have silenced alike insolent menace and cowardly sug-

gestion, remains a dead letter, carefully hidden and stowed away under the wraps of supposed antagonistic private interests. All the evils which the assumed weakness of England against hostile attacks on Canada may have entailed, may not unreasonably be traced to this same evil, and still uncured cause, of separation of aims and of efforts. The return to the Ottawa, and the construction of this navigation, which would have virtually carried the seaboard on to Lake Superior, and have placed the gunboats of England wherever, for defence, they might be wanted, was indeed flaunted to attract enthusiasm for confederation ; but with what sincerity an article of mere vague declaration sufficiently revealed, and although attention was prominently called to the evident pretence, it was well understood that having served its purpose, it should be allowed to die.

In the case of the Rideau navigation, the rule of minimum of outlay led in the matter of construction to the following results. Owing to imperfect exploration, a route was selected, which made the summit level waters part of the navigation, instead of the reservoir of supply, and which introduced two lock-stations and a most costly cutting, in executing which the greater part of a company of Sappers fell victims to malaria, all of which was not only unnecessary, but which divided into three fragments, what would otherwise have been an unbroken reach of forty miles. A system of construction was besides adopted that drowned and so destroyed, instead of draining, reclaiming, and settling land. Land, only land, that was supposed to be a drug ; who could interpose for land especially among swamps and granite boulders. So it was doomed and drowned. The valleys forming the back country between Kingston, once the capital of Upper Canada, and Ottawa, the new seat of the confederation, were submerged from principles of economy, and the deed vaunted not only as embodying philosophical economy, but as exhibiting extraordinary scientific skill.

"Alleged impossibility" delighted in such work. It did not matter what was done with the land. It was fit only for destruction. No one would or could live there. Stores might be floated through ; any other idea was absurd. Where were inhabitants to come from ? If they did, they might live anywhere else ; but certainly not there. Who would pay anything for such land ; why who would stay there if he were paid to stay, and if any stayed, why he could not live. So drown the land, establish permanent malaria, and make true the fulfilment of the prophecy. And it was done.

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Then as to the alternative route that would have avoided all these evils, and have rendered the construction of the navigation as valuable for local reclamation as for transit. With skill taking advantage of the cost of explorations, which of course shewed no tangible result in the actual construction of the work they must necessarily preceed, he gave out that that route was so impracticable that as a moving, floating, sinking, rising, dancing bog of limitless extent, its very exploration was not possible, was full of danger, and, however persevered in, could not lead to any possible result.

Angry at his eventual discomfiture, and malice, the essence of his being, he has eagerly seized on the somewhat similar formation of the country between Lake Superior and the Red River, to do all he can to hinder the re-opening of that country, and by a cause seemingly so trifling, to impede the unity and welfare of the Empire of Great Britain.

I will now give, in words nearly unchanged, only abridged to the utmost, an extract from the constructive notes made by me at the time, which led me to the conviction, that I have never seen reason to change, that the experience so to be gathered has only to be applied along the traverse of the continent to ensure its successful execution throughout.

“One of the first features remarkable is that the summit level of “the navigation, is also that of the waters essential to its supply.

“It is thus without an independent feeder. The greater the traffic “the greater the evil; the success of the navigation thus ensuring “(however paradoxical it may sound) its ruin.

“The introduction of this summit level lake is not only unnecessary “but positively injurious to the navigation, whilst as a reservoir it would “have been virtually inexhaustible.”

“It is connected with the adjoining lake by a deep and tortuous “cutting, one mile and a half long, through the hardest rock. It has “entailed two otherwise unnecessary locks. The waters of the adjacent “lakes could have been brought to the same level; indeed within a “difference of twelve inches this has been done.”

“A direct communication, free from all rock, could have been “opened between these lakes, through an ash swale and cedar swamp “that extend continuously between them through a tract of consi- “derable extent.

“Several of the deeply indented bays had, it appears, attracted “attention during such explorations as were made. The character of

" impracticable morass and floating bog, which was erroneously ascribed
 " to the above communication, caused it to be abandoned without
 " farther examination, whilst the impenetrable appearance of the cedar
 " swamp sufficed still further to repel.

" Even in the mid-winter of 1847-8, though then close to a flourishing village, and surrounded by settlers and roads, it was a matter of
 " no small difficulty for me to procure the assistance of a man who could
 " serve as guide to the general direction and features of these swamps ;
 " yet the soil proved of the richest quality, requiring only drainage, not
 " drowning, to spring forth in luxuriant fertility.

" The reclamation of rich land is certainly the least expensive,
 " and the destruction of fertile valleys the most extravagant expedient
 " that can be devised ; but if the former when reclaimed does not
 " figure to the credit side of the expense incurred in reclamation, and
 " if, on the other hand, the latter can be obtained at a nominal value,
 " the really wasteful course will be adopted, as accompanied by the
 " lesser tabulated and apparent outlay. The extent of country flooded
 " is one of the most peculiar characteristics of this navigation. For
 " miles upon miles, towards the Kingston end especially, the channel
 " is still crowded on either side with the tall, gaunt, trunks of once
 " luxuriant woods, of whose destruction they are, in their melancholy
 " grandeur, at once the blighted remnants and the reproachful monuments. The shallow waters lie placid over the forests of the valley
 " of the Cataraqui, whose sepulchre they are ; but nature doubly
 " resents her immolation in this once luxuriant region, and as from
 " some huge intramural burial ground, sends up the seeds of every foul
 " disease. The tranquil waters, in their treacherous beauty, drink in
 " the deep beams of the meridian sun, to send forth at eventide the
 " messengers of sorrow and of death. It is the very home of fever and
 " of ague. A desolate village, a rotten mill, a ruined mansion, once
 " the residence of the proprietor of the then surrounding country, are
 " the appropriate 'settlements' in this abode of death. Man, long
 " ago, has fled the scene, and left it to the occupation of the vulture,
 " the bittern, and the crane, who, like emblems of the annihilation
 " around, sit perched on the tops of the peeled trunks of the dead
 " trees, thence watching for their prey. They seem the sentinels of
 " desolation."

The antagonism between "alleged impossibility" and actual facts, is strongly illustrated by the circumstance that these errors, or crimes,

in the principles on which the execution of the work was determined, admit of being remedied without so much as interrupting the use of the navigation. I mean so far as relates to the essential condition of physical formation. This, however, is not my present object; but rather to apply to the circumstances of the country, now challenged as impassable, the experience gathered in the very thick of a similar assertion, and to shew what ill results have followed from belief in falsehood, and from that predisposition more especially which leads to such credulity, for it is unbelief in truth that is credulity in falsehood.

What has been that experience but to have seen the Westward direction towards the East, the goal of all discovery, and the hope of heroism, sacrificed without even a single thought. The effectual defence of the country, the key to England's strength or weakness on the Continent, and to her honour or dishonour everywhere, abandoned almost in ignorance. The line of a commercial highway seized upon for the sole purpose of carrying stores suited to the demands of a finished war. Economy that, after the expenditure of upwards of £1,000,000, led to an Imperial loan of £1,500,000 to neutralize its work. Construction that necessitated its own eclipse, was not even homogenous in itself, and would have made success its own undoing. The destruction of fertile valleys all along its course. The loss of its agricultural country to the capital of a province, and the decay of the best harbour on the lakes.

Is there not reason to apply to such a case the words of a great genius, whose pregnant utterances were never, it may be, more needed than at present, when he says:—

“ . . . Nothing in this world can read so awful and instructive “ a lesson . . . upon the mischief of not having large and liberal “ ideas in the management of great affairs. Never have the servants of “ the State looked at the whole of your complicated interests in one “ connected view. They have taken things by bits and scraps, some at “ one time and on one pretence, and some at another, just as they “ pressed, without any sort of regard to their relations or dependencies. “ They never had any kind of system, but only invented some tale for “ the day, in order meanly to sneak out of difficulties into which they “ had proudly strutted. . . . By such management, by the irre- “ sistible operation of feeble counsels . . . [they] have shaken the “ pillars of a commercial Empire that circled the whole globe.”

The proper application of this experience to me seems clear. I can hardly imagine anything more injurious to the best interests of the

Empire, than the neglect to complete the communications throughout the length of her possessions across the Continent of America. I do not know that an obstacle in reality more trivial could be found than that which it has of late been customary to describe as insurmountable. I can scarcely imagine a course more strictly parallel to that marked out by Burke for condemnation, than the handing over of Central British America, in the face of all moral obligation to the contrary, and, as I am informed, in violation of legal right, to be against its will, the dependency of a dependency, and this without a single provision for the redemption of a trust of 200 years. But, even as the Valley of the Cataraqui may be redeemed, so, I believe, much may be accomplished under even the most adverse circumstances, and so I fain would hope that, under whatever condition, the bugbear of impassability will be no more heard of, and the road from Assiniboia be established over the open prairie, and through the wooded country, and over the uniform

l that lead from thence to Lake of the Woods, and that the resources of the magnificent dominion of Canada will at last be found, employed upon, and equal to the re-formation of that portion which is legitimately her own. How closely together the means of easy communication and really formidable difficulties may lie, I have exemplified. A radius of about twelve miles would comprise the portion from which I have chiefly taken my illustration.

And what is Central British America? Of what especial value or interest is its welfare to the Empire at large? Is it one of three or four dominions, some equalling, some exceeding it in size, all surpassing it in present population and development? It is all this, but it is more. It is the link which is the keystone of the arch of British possession in America, and so the keystone and centre of the great girdle of world wide intercourse that serves to connect the entire empire from within its own constituent parts. It is a country larger than Canada, more fertile, more favoured in climate; but it is also the indispensable link to a continuous connection with the Pacific, and so essential to each and every one of the dominions in the Pacific, in order that these may attain that full measure of prosperity which is their due, but which depends on the power and influence of England in the Eastern ocean, and on her calling commerce and civilisation into existence throughout her now desert American wastes.

On the completion of that chain of intercourse in its perfection, Sydney would be within fifty-two days distance from England, at the

respective rates of eight-and-a-half knots by water, and twenty miles the hour by land, (allowing two full days for coaling in the Pacific.)

But Australia is the least favourable point for comparison. The distance to New Zealand would be reduced to 11,058 miles, that to Hong Kong to 10,490 miles, to Shanghai to 10,090 miles, to Japan to 9,090 miles, whilst the time and distances by all other routes are proportionately increased.

The aim is noble, and the prize is great, but how to attain it? Can a railway be carried through a yet unopened country from end to end? Shall a navigation be established before the country is inhabited? Such schemes are neither necessary nor advisable. Before a natural and perfectly unforced process the impediments vanish one by one and step by step.

That portion of the country between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg that extends from Fort Garry to Lake of the Woods, may be eliminated from consideration as presenting no difficulty whatever.

It is only necessary to apply to 100 miles of the distance to Lake Winnipeg the principles of construction derived from experience which I have detailed, to 100 miles out of 450, of which the aggregate expense is reckoned at £12,000! and which saves 546 miles on the distance from Fort Garry to Toronto over the Minnesota route.

Fort Garry reached, the great plains of the interior are opened to inhabitation. There is that great water system, emblematic of the country which it fertilizes, and which extends its arms to north and south, to east and west alike, and through territories of which the natural wealth has been placed above dispute.

The length of Lake Winnipeg is open. A road round the rapids of the Saskatchewan opens the upper country. "Impossibility" asserts the river to be impracticable for steamers. This may depend on the construction of the particular steamer mentally referred to; the voice uttering this statement sounds to me suspiciously familiar. Unquestionably all the country would become open to inhabitation, and this governs all the rest. It must be borne in mind that the natural fertility extends to the base of the mountain chain with an ever-improving climate.

Then come the mountain passes of which the practicable nature has too lately been the theme of public notice, for it to be necessary to dilate upon their several characteristics. It must suffice to state that the ascent from Edmonton to Jasper House, a distance of 400 miles, is given at 822 feet in height or a clear ascent of 6 feet to 9 feet per mile.

To the height of the pass from 100 to 150 miles farther, the mean clear ascent from Edmonton is from $3\frac{1}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet per mile. From Jasper House to the head of the Fraser River is 144 miles, thence to Cariboo 150 miles, and from there to the Pacific to the head of the navigation from 300 miles to 400 miles, according to the direction taken.

These would be formidable distances were it proposed that construction throughout their length, and amidst mountain heights (the passes vary from 4,500 feet to 5,985 feet in height), should precede inhabitation. They cease to be so when they are rightly viewed as what they are, appointed means for communication between established peoples or inpouring inhabitation.

The matter pressing for decision is the future position of Assiniboia or Red River; and the importance of that question can be rightly determined only by regard to its incomparable importance as affording the means of this ultimate complete communication which must, so to speak, spontaneously spring forth on the inhabitation of this country, if it be itself a dominion in the Empire of Great Britain.

But how is it that a country with such resources has been left so long hermetically sealed, and this work so long undone? I confess it puzzled me for years to find an adequate solution. It is simple, rather satisfactory when found. The Hudson Bay Company, in its old organisation, depended upon a charter violently assailed, and only gradually recognized, and that only in part, whilst clauses, palpably unconstitutional and illegal, might be ruled to hazard even legal rights flowing from the same grant. The proposal for a Crown Colony, when finally approved in principle, was still beset with more or less official difficulty. Canada, after refusing offers, next advanced pretensions. The latent opposition to the very principle of colonial existence, rendered the erection of a new colony, vehemently opposed by selfish interests, doubly difficult. Its unconditional surrender to a popular claimant, afforded an easy and tempting solution. Chiefly, however, it may have been, that the solution most be looked for east of Temple Bar. Rival lines had been shrewdly pushed forward, in the golden age of limited liability, based on an already inflowing population in the adjoining Republican States, but where every physical feature was adverse rather than favourable to their construction. In any degree to divert population, the sole source of support, was not the policy of the promoters, who were wiser than the philosophy which deprecates the increase of humanity, while the solitudes of earth are languishing for peoples,

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Englishmen, however excellent their qualities, do not all prefer their country's well-being, or the nation's glory to their personal gains. It is quite possible, too, to understand that Statesmen and Members of Parliament, chosen for their brilliant penetration, were a little backward to exhibit themselves as having been as simple as shareholders, and as egregiously befooled by selfish financiers, but with a yet worse result for the poor commonwealth.

There is little left for me to do save to thank you for the attention you have so kindly and patiently bestowed upon me. Though it has been my happy privilege to put before you something of the means that might relieve many pressing problems of suffering fellow-countrymen, and add incalculable strength, prosperity, and glory to your Empire, I have had to show that similar opportunities have been before neglected, and are in danger of being again neglected now. During a famine once before, the millions now wanted were wasted in labour purposely made fruitless. The theme could not be made an altogether pleasant one.

I have faithfully endeavoured to place before you facts in all their true instruction, whether they were fair or stern; but if I have had to point out error either in act or by omission, I have, I trust, thoroughly avoided to charge such faults as there have been, and are, on either individual or party.

It is the especial glory of such a Society as this that it demonstrates that it is honourably possible to cherish national duties, national interests, and national affections, to give ear to every effort for their welfare; but to have none for any voice of partizanship. In that spirit, I have not scrupled, within the limits of my theme, to shew what bitter fruits that partizanship bears. I acknowledge the intensity of my desire that the Empire of Great Britain may become a unity so perfect, that, throughout its glorious extent, the practice and the perpetuation of the sense of duty, may be strong enough to countervail that miserable, guilty selfishness, that sacrifice of the common good to self-seeking, which presents so sad a contrast to the spirit of the age in which the Empire was acquired, and which furnishes so ominous a warning for the age in which it is contemned.

The question has been asked, "What do colonists want?"

The principles and the affections of nationality are often to be found more strong in the Englishman who has gone forth to colonise, than in him who has remained at home. Such Colonists require the right to be, what so long as they are in being, they cannot fail to be.

They want to be as Englishmen. They want nothing beyond the rights and power of an Englishman, and nothing short of that. In the spring, the herb puts forth, the flower buds, the seed bursts from its bonds. You do not tread them under foot. In the spring time of English nations, such as the colonists have founded, they will put forth all the old affections with the unconscious strength of irresistible nature. Do not uproot them. Rather it rests with England to set them as constellations in the firmament of her empire, freely revolving around the Imperial sun of England, the centre from whence they spring. Let then her light and warmth once more go forth as she recovers from her cold eclipse.

Is not the way to do this to place the empire under the guardianship of an imperial tribunal, founded on honour and right, and to rescue the determination of its destinies from the sole power, accidentally acquired, of an assembly in which they have no voice nor representation, and, which, though it fills to suffocation at the call of passionate party strife, displays in empty benches, or by leaving to be dealt with in the secrecy of a closet, its want of interest, either real or legitimate, in the welfare of the empire at large?

To attain this end, three maxims not only of constitutional law, but of canon and indeed of all law, must be reasserted in their strength. These are—

I. The obligation towards the state of every subject of that state, in person and in goods.

II. The complicity, moral and legal, of every subject of a state in the acts of guilt, if any, of that state.

III. The right of influence in proportion to obligation.

In the old Norman language of this kingdom, there was a word that signified at once, straight, right, law, justice, privilege, and obligation. That is a healthy condition in which the language of a people does not admit of the dissociation of these ideas.

The word was "DROIT."

The path would be clear, were this sense of obligation felt. If it were understood, it would be much. It may be something to have even stated it.

I have endeavoured to give in the terseness of an imperial motto, the force of this truth, and its result :

POSE SUR LE DROIT : QU'Y TOUCHERA.

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